



Harvest Time = Quality Family Time

School is underway, and with it the scheduled routines of practice, rehearsals and homework have taken hold. It can be hard to find the time to take a break and just relax. Down time is important for the whole family.

We hear it all the time in the media – we’re a culture that thrives on being busy. Kids are scheduled (sometimes even over-scheduled); parents are running between work, school functions, home, errands and more. We can sometimes feel guilty if we’re not doing something productive. But, there are experts who would argue that downtime is productive. It encourages creative thinking, helps us be more patient and allows us to better handle stress.

While the relaxed days of summer vacation are now a fond memory, fall creates great opportunities to relax and have fun as a family. Enjoy tailgating and watching a football game. Go for a hike to see the trees turning color. Visit an apple orchard or explore a pumpkin patch. Get lost in a corn maze. Find a local fall festival near you – there are many quirky and fun activities across Wisconsin (hint: check out TravelWisconsin.com for a listing of events and activities across the state.)

Costume Safety

- **Use makeup instead of masks.** Masks can make it difficult for kids to see and breathe. But, make sure the makeup is safe and non-toxic and remove it before your child goes to bed.
- **Strive for light-colored costumes,** or add glow sticks or glowing necklaces to help ensure kids are easily seen by others.
- **Avoid oversized or high-heeled shoes** that could cause your kids to trip, and similarly, keep hats, wigs, skirts, pants and even shirtsleeves fitted to your child.
- If your child has to **carry props, like a wand or shield,** make sure it is flexible, soft and doesn’t limit their vision. Remember he or she is going to be trying to carry it along with a bag for candy.
- **Consider adding an interior pocket** if the costume doesn’t already include one so your child can carry a cell phone and identification if he or she is going with another group.

Trick-or-Treating

Take some simple precautions to ensure your child stays safe –

- **Don’t assume your child knows how to stay safe.** Go over some basic safety tips for the evening.
- **Teach kids to call 9-1-1,** or their local emergency number, if they have an emergency or become lost.
- **If your child is under 12,** make sure he or she is accompanied by a trusted adult who will be supervising.
- **For kids who are older** and going on their own, make sure you know the route they’ll be taking and when you expect them back. Limit trick-or-treating to your neighborhood.
- **Never enter the home of a stranger.**
- **Make sure kids know the “rules”** – only go to houses with porch lights on, never enter a house or a car for a treat and stay with the group.
- **Always walk on sidewalks** or if there are no sidewalks, stay to the far edge of the road facing traffic.
- **Walk, don’t run** from house to house.
- **Look both ways** before crossing the street and only cross at cross walks. Make sure your child has a flashlight with fresh batteries.
- **Have a filling meal or snack before going** so kids won’t be tempted to eat a lot of candy.

Goblin' the Goodies

Make sure you inspect the treats before your kids dive in to ensure they are all properly wrapped.

- **Avoid eating homemade treats.**
- **Set limits** to how much candy is available to kids. Don’t let them keep the bag of candy in their room. Communicate how much they can have the night of and a few days after.
- **Consider letting kids have a treat or two each day** rather than just setting out a big bowl (it will help you limit how much you indulge, too).
- **Participate in a candy exchange.** Some dentists and orthodontists (dentists who specialize in braces) offer candy exchanges. You turn in some candy and get healthy treats in exchange.

Or, you turn in some candy and they pay you \$1 per pound. They donate the candy to soup kitchens or to troops overseas.

With so many guidelines it can seem like all the fun is being taken out of the holiday. Remember to help kids discover it is about more than just the candy – it is dressing in fun costumes and having a good time with family and friends. Maybe it is even trying to scare each other a little bit. So, grab your flashlight and have fun out there.